DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 093 EA 016 641

AUTHOR Pavan, Barbara Nelson; Rometo, Lorraine
TITLE Women Administrators in Pennsylvania's Public Schools: Profiles, Problems, and Pleasures.
PUB DATE Nov 82
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group session on "Research on Women in Education" (Philadelphia, PA, November 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age; *Educational Administration; Elementary Secondary Education; *Females; *Sex Bias; *Sex Discrimination; *Sex Stereotypes; *Superintendents; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania's public school women administrators and their respective superintendents were surveyed by mailed questionnaires, which gathered information about their childhood, families, educational preparation, job recruitment, professional experiences, and future plans. The superintendents rated their work performance. Findings were compared with data from two earlier studies. Some of the administrators were interviewed. The study describes the women's positions and the barriers they successfully overcame to achieve these positions. Some findings are as follows: more younger women are entering administration, fewer are "single," more are combining career and family (but are having fewer children), more are publishing, and more are striving for higher level positions. (Author/MD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED242093

Women Administrators in Pennsylvania's Public Schools: Profiles, Problems, and Pleasures

Barbara Nelson Pavan, Ed.D.
Temple University

Lorraine Rometo, Ed.D.
Wissahickon High School

ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania's public school women administrators and their respective superintendents were surveyed by mailed questionnaires. The women gave information about their childhoods, families, educational preparation, job recruitment, professional experiences, and future plans. The superintendents rated the women's work performance. Findings were compared with data from two earlier studies. Some women were interviewed. This study describes women currently holding administrative positions and how these women were able to overcome successfully the barriers to achieving administrative positions.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara Nelson Pavan
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper Presented At

RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN EDUCATION

American Education Research Association - Special Interest Group

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

November, 1982

EA 016 641

Women Administrators in Pennsylvania's Public Schools:
Profiles, Problems, and Pleasures

Only a limited number of women are presently employed as school administrators in the state of Pennsylvania or in the United States. In fact during the 1981-82 school year, women were less likely to be found as school principals in Pennsylvania (9%) than in the United States as a whole (16%). In 1977, 40% of the secondary teachers and only 2.8% of the secondary principals in Pennsylvania were female while the national average for female secondary principals was 7%. In 1978, 77% of the elementary teachers and 12.4% of the elementary principals in Pennsylvania were female while the national average for female elementary principals was 18%. Except for a change in percent of elementary female principals to 13.0%, these figures remained almost the same in 1981 for Pennsylvania. The number and percentage of women principals both elementary and secondary declined between 1970 and 1981 in Pennsylvania.

For the first time in recent years, the percent of women employed as superintendents (1.7%) and assistant superintendents (9.1%) in Pennsylvania resembled the national averages of 1.8% and 9% respectively. In terms of numbers, Pennsylvania accounted for 25 of the 721 female superintendents and assistant superintendents in the United States for the school year 1981-82. See Table 1 for additional data.

The purpose of this study was to determine the current status of women administrators in the public schools of Pennsylvania. Answers to the following questions were sought. What personal background factors have influenced these women to become educational administrators? Have these women experienced barriers in their climb to administrative positions? If so, what have the barriers been, and how did the women deal with them? In order to answer these questions, the childhood background, current family situation, educational preparation, professional experience, and future personal and professional plans of the women were studied. Findings were compared with data from

two earlier Pennsylvania studies (Zimmerman, 1971; Smith, 1976). A professional evaluation of these women in their current positions was sought from the superintendents of the school districts where the women were employed. An answer was sought to the following question. "Are these women outstanding, exceptional administrators?"

Method

Population

All women holding public school administrative positions in the state of Pennsylvania during the Spring of 1981 were surveyed via a mailed questionnaire. The following positions were considered as administrative jobs; superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrative assistant, assistant executive director, principal, and assistant principal. Supervisory positions were not included in the study. At that time 386 women held the positions designated as administrative and 62.4% of the women (241) returned the questionnaires. An adequate proportion of women in each role category, in varying size and district location responded to provide information from all the varied sections of the state. (Table 2). Central office positions were held by 23.7%, secondary by 29.9%, and the remaining 46.5% were elementary school administrators. Principalships were held by 52.3% of the women and vice-principalships by 24.1%. (Table 4). The superintendents of these women were also surveyed and 74.1% completed the work performance questionnaire.

Procedure

The women received an 8 page, 60 item questionnaire which included many items needing written responses rather than checking off responses from a list. The questions were those used in the Smith and Zimmerman studies (each used a different survey), items from other questionnaires, and additional questions of interest. This survey was then pilot tested on women administrators who were

not to be a part of the survey. Follow-up interviews with a random sample of 20 of the women conducted after the survey demonstrated the stability of the written answers as the oral responses did not vary from the written answers.

The Superintendent's rating form was a shortened version of the SMART instrument (Stefanski, 1978) which requested ranking for individual work areas and concluded with an overall performance rating on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Only the overall rating was used in this study.

Results

Personal Data

Most of the women were first-born children from two-sibling families with parents who had encouraged their daughters to seek higher education. During childhood and in the teenage years, the majority of the women had had close and warm relationships with their parents, especially with their mothers. Play activities engaged in most often were outdoor activities, reading, and playing school. The women ranged in age from 29 to 66 years with the average age being 48 years. Eighty-seven per cent of the women were white. (Table 5). Seventy-four per cent of the women had been married but, at the time of the study only 55% were married. Fifty-nine per cent of the women reported having had children with the average number of children per woman 1.6. Since 71% of the women had no children under 17 at the time of the study, there was little need for child care arrangements.

One-third of the women had household help for an average of 6 hours per week. Most of the women reported working 10 to 15 hours per week themselves on household duties. Two-thirds of the married women reported strong approval of their work by their spouses. If their spouses had not approved, they had most often been dealt with through discussion, insistence on the right to a career, or balance of job and home responsibilities by the woman. If their spouses would be transferred beyond commuting distance, the majority would not quit their positions

immediately in order to follow their husbands. Most women indicated job mobility within 150 mile radius of their present homes. Home ownership was listed most often as a factor which contributed to limited mobility.

Educational Preparation

Most of the women in the study had earned a master's degree, usually in educational administration. Fifty-one had earned Certificates of Advanced Graduate Study and 50 had earned their doctorates. Compared with the women who were over 60 years old, 6 times as many in the under 30 age group had earned their doctorates. Half of the women who held doctorates were in central office positions. (Table 3). At the time of the study 37 women were involved in a degree program; 34 of these working for doctorates. Two hundred and five of the women reported holding principal's certificates, 56 had supervisory certificates, and 55 had superintendent's letters of eligibility from Pennsylvania, 18 other states, and the District of Columbia. Approximately one-quarter of the women had had books or articles published and of these, 40% had published more than two.

Job Recruitment

The women had most often become interested in educational administration because they wanted a stronger role in education. The most often cited source of encouragement to enter administration had been "Myself." Administrative superiors had been the group that had most often discouraged the women from entering administration; however, more women reported no discouragement at all.

In trying to locate administrative positions, the women most frequently used information from administrators. For 84% of the women, the first administrative position had been in the district where they were employed at the time. One-third of the women had obtained their present position by being selected in advance of applying and another one-third had received their present position by applying for

a vacancy in the district where they had been working. One or less applications were generally submitted before being offered their first and their present positions. Over half of the women had had only one interview while 11% had never had a job interview.

About one-fifth of the women had experienced difficulty in obtaining administrative positions. Of this group, nearly one-half felt the cause of the difficulty was prejudice against women. In trying to solve this difficulty, the women had used a total of 10 different kinds of solutions. The solution used most frequently had been perseverance with increasing geographical distance in which to look for positions and seeking the help of superiors was cited next most frequently.

Professional Experiences

No pattern was noted as to the age when the women decided on a career in education or in administration. Most of the women received their first educational position when 21 years old and their first administration position had been attained between the ages of 21 and 56. The position of classroom teacher had been held longer than any other educational position. The administrative positions held most often had been principal and vice-principal. Women secondary principals tended to be younger and to advance more rapidly than women elementary principals or central office administrators.

Most of the women had worked in only one district as an administrator, but the districts varied in size and setting including urban, suburban, and rural. During the 1980-1981 school year, the average salary was $30,215.78. Not quite 50% had earned over $30,000 for the year and 5% had earned over $40,000. Three-quarters of the women had been absent three or less days during the 1979-1980 school year. Less than 50% of the women had taken leaves of absence averaging

about 12 months; only 14% had taken maternity or child care leave. Over 90% of the women cited a feeling of self-satisfaction and accomplishment as their greatest career reward.

The greatest obstacle experienced in seeking a career had been that of time scheduling with financial problems, pressures of child rearing, and prejudice listed next. Two solutions, maintaining a professional attitude and adjusting time schedule, had been used overwhelmingly by the women to overcome these obstacles. (Table 6). The problem of job and home conflicts had been experienced most often in present and previous administrative positions followed by lack of acceptance in male administrative social situations, and third had been resentment from subordinates. In dealing with problems on the job, the women most frequently had maintained a professional attitude as a solution and the next highest response was an indication that the problem had not been resolved. (Table 7). In general, relationships with fellow workers were characterized as cordial. If the women had found negative co-workers, they most often had dealt with those workers by maintaining a professional attitude or by doing their own jobs well. Three-quarters of the women had found their communities to be accepting of a female administrator. If not, the women most frequently had dealt with the nonacceptance by increased community contact.

Future Plans

The position listed most often as an ultimate career goal was the principal. Almost one-half of the women listed goals which indicated upward mobility. Some of the women had already reached their ultimate goal: 25% of the central office women, 16% of the secondary principals, and 49% of the elementary principals. Retirement was planned between the ages of 60 and 65. In searching for new positions, the women most often would rely on advertisements in journals and newspapers.

When asked about personal plans for the next two years, 39% of the women who responded stated that they would look for new positions. Another one-third planned sabbatical leaves for study or travel. If they anticipated problems in dealing with future plans, the women would most often change to a more reasonable plan or seek additional training to solve the problem.

Superintendents' Ratings

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), over two-thirds of the superintendents rated their women administrators 8 or above on work performance. Only 4% gave their women administrators a rating lower than 5. Clearly, the superintendents felt that the majority of the women were in the superior category.

Comparisons with Earlier Studies

Pennsylvania women school administrators were surveyed in June 1970 by Zimmerman, in November 1975 by Smith, and in April 1981 by Rometo. Zimmerman included women from districts which ranged in size from 6,000 to 100,000 students while the other two studies included all school districts in the state. Smith and Rometo both surveyed women principals and vice principals in elementary and secondary schools. Zimmerman's study included both administrators and supervisors who were part of the superintendent's immediate and extended teams. Rometo's study was limited to those administrative positions with the following titles: superintendent, assistant superintendent, administrative assistant, assistant executive director, business manager, principal, and vice principal. Women with supervisory positions were excluded from the study (which in 1981 were approximately 50% of all central office positions). This accounts for the large difference between the numbers of central office women in the Zimmerman and Rometo studies.

The following trends as noted in Table 8 were discovered regarding a comparison of the women in this study with those in Zimmerman's and Smith's

studies. More younger women entering administration. Less women in the "single, never married" category, more women appeared to be combining family and career. On the average, the number of children the women have is decreasing. Fewer women are getting bachelor's degrees in elementary education, while more are majoring in educational administration when seeking master's degrees and doctorates. More women are publishing. Women administrators are working in a greater number of districts. Salaries are much higher which probably reflect the dates of the studies. Most women in all three studies had been absent no more than 5 days per year. Fewer are taking maternity/child care leaves and more are taking study leaves. More women are striving for higher level positions.

Discussion

These studies attempted to cover so many issues that it is necessary to step back and review the major factors. What is the profile of the woman Pennsylvania school administrator in 1981? What are her problems and her pleasures?

Profile

She is white, first-born, and presently married with two children now grown. Encouragement has come from her parents, her spouse, and herself rather than from mentors. She had worked in only one suburban or urban district receiving superior work ratings from her superintendent, and had a very low absentee and leave rate. Job mobility is limited by home ownership to 150 miles. More of the younger women had doctorates in educational administration and more secondary than elementary principals were seeking advancement.

Problems

Barriers most often reported were discrimination against women, lack of administrative openings, time scheduling, financial problems, job/home conflict, lack of acceptance in male social administrative situations, resentment from subordinates and peers, and feminine role as follower expected. Solutions reported as most often used or planned for barriers were perserverance, increasing

geographical search area, help from spouses and superiors, maintaining professional attitude, time schedule adjustment, low-keyed interaction, switching to more reasonable plan, or not resolved.

Pleasures

She is more likely to be aspiring upward than women administrators five and ten years ago. She is attempting to pursue both family and career. She is entering administration at a younger age, usually with advanced work in educational administration or is taking a study leave for that purpose. She is more likely to have published. She became interested in educational administration because she believed the position important, wanted a stronger role in education which would provide a better opportunity for service, and enjoyed leadership. Her perserverance paid off.

Recommendations

Women desiring to be educational administrators should be prepared to deal with perceived or actual discrimination. They should make administrators within their own districts aware of their interest. Women usually do not find mentors to sponsor them, but are able to get needed job information from other administrators. They should not be discouraged if they experience many failures or rejections in the process of searching for a new position; they should persist.

School districts searching for administrators to fill post should seriously consider qualified women applicants. School districts in the hiring process should be certain that their job descriptions, verbal images of possible candidates, and language usage do not reflect a "male only" attitude. Administrators, especially superintendents, in districts where women are working as administrators, should be careful not to exclude these women from administrative activities, both daily and special social happenings.

REFERENCES

Rometo, Lorraine K. "Women Administrators in Pennsylvania's Public Schools: Overcoming Barriers to Recruitment and Promotion." Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1982.

Smith, Judith Ann. "A Study of Women Who are Certified and Employed As Principals and Assistant Principals in Pennsylvania." Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1976.

Stefanski, Charles F., Jr., "The Herzberg Job Satisfaction Theory as It Applies to Selected High School Principals in Pennsylvania." Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1978.

Zimmerman, Jeanne Noll. "The Status of Women in Educational Administrative Positions Within the Central Offices of Public Schools." Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1971.

Table 1

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF FEMALES IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHING POSITIONS

	PENNSYLVANIA								U.S.A.
	70	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	
Superintendents									
Number	3	2	2	1	3	1	3	8	241
Percent	0.8%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	0.6%	1.7%	1.8%(1981)*
Asst. Supt.									
Number	9	5	11	7	12	12	14	17	480
Percent	5.1%	2.7%	5.2%	3.6%	6.2%	6.5%	7.6%	9.1%	9.0%(1981)*
Principals									
Number	311	247	238	228	232	227	226	235	9,815
Percent	12.0%	8.9%	8.7%	8.4%	8.5%	8.4%	8.5%	9.0%	16.0%(1981)*
Secondary									
Number Principals	32	23	23	29	27	28	28	29	
Percent Principals	3.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.7%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.8%	7.0%(1977)**
Percent Teachers	40.6%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	
Elementary									
Number Principals	279	224	215	199	205	199	198	206	
Percent Principals	18.4%	13.4%	13.0%	12.0%	12.4%	12.2%	12.4%	13.0%	18.0%(1978)***
Percent Teachers	79.9%	76.8%	76.0%	76.0%	77.0%	76.0%	76.0%	76.0%	

SOURCE:
Pennsylvania Department of Education
*American Association of School Administrators
**National Association of Secondary School Principals
***National Association of Elementary School Principals

Table 2

The Responses of the Women

	Level and Position	Total Possible Responses	Total Number of Responses	Rate of Return
I.	Central office	88	57	64.8
	Assistant Executive Director - I U	2	1	50.0
	District Superintendent	7	6	85.7
	Assistant District Superintendent	16	13	81.2
	Business Manager	6	4	66.6
	Administrative Assistant	57	33	57.9
II.	Secondary	110	72	66.3
	Principal	28	18	64.2
	Assistant Principal	82	54	65.8
III.	Elementary	188	112	59.6
	Principal	179	108	60.3
	Assistant Principal	9	4	44.4
IV.	Grand Total	386	241	62.4

Table 3

Doctorates of the Women

Crosstabulation of Doctorates by Level of Position

	Levels of Positions			
Doctorates	Central Office	Secondary	Elementary	Totals
f	25	15	10	50
%	50	30	20	100.0

Crosstabulation of Age Categories with Earned Doctorates

Age Groups by Years	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Totals
Number of Doctorates	5	7	17	20	1	50
Percent of Doctorates	10.0	14.0	34.0	40.0	2.0	100.0
Total Number of Administrative Women	17	48	70	84	22	241
Percent of Each Age with Doctorate	29.4	14.6	24.3	23.8	4.5	-

Mean Age = 42.26923
s.d. = 7.04147

Table 4

Positions of the Women

Levels of the Positions			
Level		f	%
Central Office		57	23.7
Secondary		72	29.9
Elementary		112	46.5
	Totals	241	100.0

Kinds of Positions			
Position		f	%
Principal		126	52.3
Vice-principal		58	24.1
Administrative Assistant		33	13.7
Assistant District Superintendent		13	5.4
District Superintendent		6	2.5
Business Manager		4	1.7
Assistant Executive Director		1	.4
	Totals	241	100.0

Table 5

Personal Characteristics and Family Background of the Women

Characteristic		f	%
Number of Children in Parental Family			
1 child		37	15.5
2 children		65	27.2
3 children		57	23.8
4 or more children		33	13.8
	Totals	239	100.0
Position amongst Children in Parental Family			
Only child		35	14.6
First born		91	37.9
In-between		65	27.1
Youngest		49	20.4
	Totals	240	100.0
Race			
White		207	86.6
Black		29	12.1
Hispanic		3	1.3
	Totals	239	100.0
Age at Time of Survey			
29 years and younger		17	7.1
30-39 years		48	19.9
40-49 years		70	29.0
50-59 years		84	34.9
60 years and older		22	9.1
	Totals	241	100.0

Mean = 47.688 Mode = 53 Median = 48.625

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 6

Greatest Career Obstacles

Obstacles Experienced

Obstacle	Number	Percent of Responses	Percent of cases
Time scheduling	68	28.8	43.5
Financial	45	19.1	28.5
Pressure of childrearing	43	18.2	27.3
Discrimination	42	17.8	26.6
Self-motivation	17	7.2	10.4
Objection of spouse	10	4.2	5.8
Travel problems	8	3.4	4.5
Objection of father	1	.4	.6
Two-professions family	1	.4	.6
Reaction of peers	1	.4	.6
Totals	236	99.9	148.4

N = 154 cases

Solutions to Greatest Career Obstacles

Solutions	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Professional attitude	71	37.8
Time schedule adjustment (home)	53	28.2
Financial help	18	9.6
Political or legal action	13	6.9
No solution	10	5.3
Emotional/mental help	8	4.3
Education and/or training	6	3.2
Change in job situation	5	2.7
Timing and/or luck	3	1.6
Diversionary activity	1	.5
Totals	188	100.1

Table 7

Problems Experienced in Administrative Positions

Problems	f	% of Responses	% of Women in Study
Conflict between demands of position and home responsibilities	54	15.0	22.4
Lack of acceptance in male administrative social situations	44	12.1	18.3
Subordinates resent orders from a woman	42	11.7	17.4
Other educators expect you to take the traditional woman's role as a follower rather than a leader	39	10.8	16.2
Sex discrimination	39	10.8	16.2
Resentment from fellow administrators because they must work with a woman	35	9.7	14.5
Unnatural or uneasy relationships with members of opposite sex as a superior on the educational ladder	33	9.2	13.7
Patronizing point of view from subordinates	21	5.8	8.7
Conferences and conventions which conflict with home and family responsibilities	21	5.8	8.7
Decision making complicated by emotional feelings	15	4.2	6.2
Sexual harassment	9	2.5	3.7
Community lack of confidence	4	1.1	1.7
Criticism due to lack of mechanical ability	3	.8	1.2
Inability to meet physical requirements on the job	1	.3	.4
Totals	360	100.0	149.3[a]

N = 158 women responded to this question
N = 241 respondants to survey

Solutions	f	%
Maintained professional attitude	74	24.4
Not resolved	57	18.8
Adjusted home schedule	55	18.2
Low-keyed interaction	46	15.2
Aggressive action	23	7.6
New position or contacts	15	5.0
Downplay female aspect	15	5.0
Avoided emotionalism	11	3.6
Maintained sense of humor	5	1.7
Sought help of mentor	2	.7
Totals	303	100.0

N = 144 cases

[a]Higher than 100 percent because multiple responses were possible.

Table 8

Summary Comparison of Zimmerman, Smith, and Romero Studies

Variable of Comparison	Percents of Responses				Trends
	Zimmerman (1970)	Romero Central Office (1981)	Smith (1975)	Romero--Principals (1981)	
Age					
Under 30 years	2.4	8.8	3.4	6.5	More younger women entering administration
60 years and over	19.8	10.5	8.6	8.7	
Marital status					
Married	42.5	41.9	52.6	59.3	Fewer women in the never have married category.
Single	57.5	58.1	47.4	40.6	
Single, never married	40.7	30.9	33.7	24.2	
Average number of children	1.64	1.33	1.6	1.6	Number of children decreasing
Majors of degrees					
Bachelor's-- Elementary Education	24.1	24.5	55.6	43.0	Less with bachelor's degree in elementary education since Smith study
Master's-- Educational Administration	12.8	30.0	38.7	39.9	More majoring in educational administration for master's degree
Doctorate-- Educational Administration	35.3	75.0	80.0	78.3	Since 1975 more majoring in educational administration for doctorate
Published? Yes	26.9	48.1	9.1	22.9	More publishing
Worked in only one district as an administrator	88.5	71.2	86.3	82.8	Working in more districts
Salary--over $24,000	1.8	80.7	22.8	75.0	Salaries much higher
Absenteeism-- 0-5 days absent per year	84.2	82.7	85.7	83.8	Great majority in all three studies have no more than five days absent per year
Kinds of Leaves Taken--					
Maternity/child care	27.9	25.0	66.7	37.6	Less taking maternity/ childcare leaves
Study	37.2	60.7	10.6	27.6	More taking study leaves
Ultimate goal-- Remain in present position	73.6	17.2	49.7	7.6	More striving for higher level positions

BEST COPY AVAILABLE